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SECRET WARS
II
CONTINUES IN THIS ISSUE!

the AMAZING SPIDER-MAN®

IN THIS ISSUE:

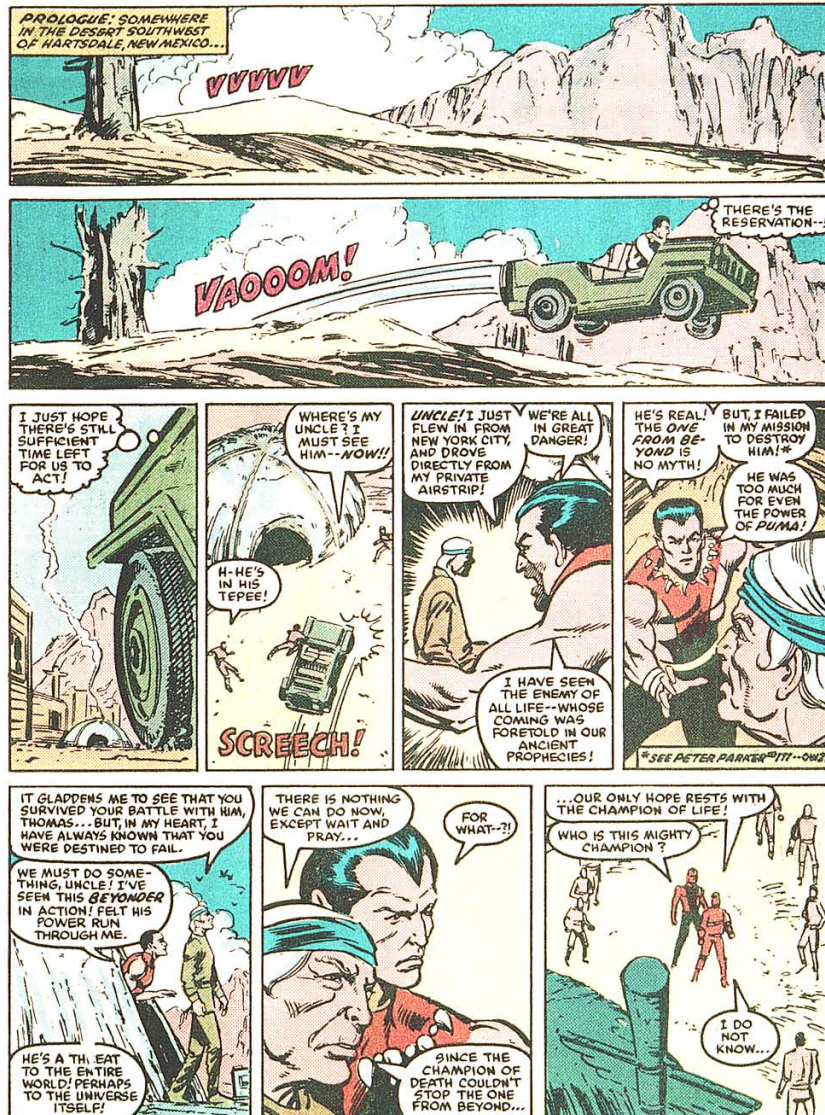
THE **BEYONDER**™ BATTLES **MEPHISTO!**™



THE **SOUL** OF THE **SPIDER!**

the AMAZING SPIDER-MAN

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THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN® Vol. 1, No. 274, March, 1986. (ISSN 0274-5232) Published by MARVEL COMICS GROUP, James E. Gallon, President, Stan Lee, Publisher, Michael Hobson, Group Vice-President, Milton Schiffman, Vice-President, Production. OFFICE OF PUBLICATION: 387 PARK AVENUE SOUTH, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10016. SECOND CLASS POSTAGE PAID AT NEW YORK, NY AND AT ADDITIONAL MAILING OFFICES. Published monthly. Copyright © 1985 by Marvel Comics Group, a division of Cadence Industries Corporation. All rights reserved. Price 75¢ per copy in the U.S. and 95¢ in Canada. Subscription rate \$5.00 for 12 issues. Canada and Foreign, \$11.00. Printed in the U.S.A. No similarity between any of the names, characters, persons, and/or institutions in this magazine with those of any living or dead person or institution is intended, and any such similarity which may exist is purely coincidental. This periodical may not be sold except by authorized dealers and is sold subject to the conditions that it shall not be sold or distributed with any part of its cover or markings removed, nor in a mutilated condition. THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN (including all prominent characters featured in the issue), and the distinctive likenesses thereof, are trademarks of the MARVEL COMICS GROUP. POSTMASTER: SEND ADDRESS CHANGES TO AMAZING SPIDER-MAN, 387 PARK AVENUE SOUTH, 10TH FLOOR, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10016.

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Stan Lee
PRESENTS: THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN

LO, THERE SHALL COME A CHAMPION!

IN A GALAXY SO DISTANT THAT ITS LIGHT WILL NOT REACH THE MILKY WAY UNTIL LONG AFTER PLANET EARTH HAS BEEN REDUCED TO COSMIC ASH, THE ONE FROM BEYOND STANDS...

...AND PONDERES THE FATE OF THIS MANY-LAYERED UNIVERSE!

SHOULD HE WIPE IT CLEAN? ERASE IT AND LEAVE IT AS BARREN AND LIFELESS AS THE ONE IN WHICH HE ONCE DWELLED? OR CONTINUE HIS SEEMINGLY FUTILE QUEST TO FIND PEACE WITHIN THE REALM OF EXISTENCE?

SO GREAT IS HIS INNER TURMOIL THAT THE VERY FABRIC OF REALITY IS REWOUND HIM!

SUNS IMplode! WORLDS COLLIDE! PARALLEL DIMENSIONS COLLAPSE UPON THEMSELVES!

AND, YET, THIS IS ONLY THE BEGINNING--!

CONTINUING THE
AWESOME SAGA OF
SECRET WARS II

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SUDDENLY, THE ONE FROM BEYOND SENSES A NEARBY DISTURBANCE. TO HIM, IT IS ONLY A PETTY ANNOYANCE--

--IN THE FORM OF A VAST SPACE ARMADA-- THE COALITION OF OVER THIRTY THOUSAND, ADVANCED GALACTIC CIVILIZATIONS!

COMMANDER, WE HAVE THE BEYONDER, BUT WE MUST HURRY! OUR SENSORS INDICATE THAT HE'S PREPARING TO TAMPER WITH THE VERY FRAMEWORK OF REALITY!

WE HAVE NO CHOICE! WE MUST EMPLOY OUR ULTIMATE WEAPON-- THE GALACTIC ERADICATOR!

A THOUSAND INHABITED WORLDS WILL PERISH IN ITS AFTERSHOCK, BUT THAT'S A SMALL PRICE TO PAY FOR THE SALVATION OF THE ENTIRE UNIVERSE!

UPON MY COMMAND--

FIRE!!

STREAKING ACROSS THE VOID OF SPACE WITH A SPEED WHICH FAR EXCEEDS LIGHT ITSELF, THE BEAST BURSTS UPON THE SOLITARY FIGURE--

--FORCING HIM BACKWARD A SINGLE STEP!

HE IS NOT AMUSED!

WITH THE MEREST OF SHRUGS, HE CAUSES THE ENTIRE SPACE FLEET--

NOT CONTENT WITH THIS PUNISHMENT, HE REACHES OUT TO THE HOMEWORLDS FROM WHICH THE FLEETS CAME--

--AND TO EVERY PLANET THAT EVER HAD CONTACT WITH ANY OF THESE WORLDS...

--TO VANISH FROM EXISTENCE!

THEY, TOO, CEASE TO EXIST!

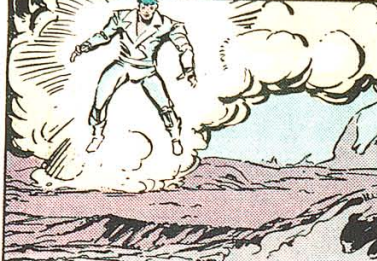
BUT, HE REALIZES THAT HE HASN'T COMPLETELY WIPED AWAY THE MEMORY OF THESE RACES.

HIS ACTIONS ARE CONSTANTLY BEING OBSERVED BY THE MOST SOPHISTICATED BEINGS IN THIS MULTIVERSE!

HOWEVER, HE CAN FIX THAT--

...BY ELIMINATING THEM TOO!

DEEP WITHIN HIS DARK DOMAIN, BROODS THE SUPREME LORD OF HATE AND EVIL... MEPHISTO!



SO! THE BEYONDER HAS VANISHED TO A PLACE WHERE EVEN MY MYSTIC VAPORS CANNOT FOLLOW!

HOW I DESPISE HIM!

ON A WHIM, HE JUST ELIMINATED A FEW THOUSAND GALACTIC RACES--

-- BUT NOT EVEN MY BELOVED DEATH PROFITED BY THIS ACTION!

THOSE BEINGS DIDN'T DIE-- THEY MERELY CEASED LIVING! IT'S AS THOUGH THEY NEVER EXISTED!

COUNTLESS BILLIONS OF SOULS WHOSE SUFFERINGS I WILL FOREVER BE DENIED! I DEPLORE SUCH WASTE!

-- NOT EVEN THE SIMPLE PLEASURE OF WATCHING A HATED ENEMY SUFFERING ETERNAL TORMENT!

THERE CAN BE NO DOUBT NOW THAT THE BEYONDER IS DETERMINED TO DISMANTLE THE ENTIRE MULTI-VERSE!



FWAK!

HOW SHOULD I AWAIT THE FINAL CATAclysm?

BY CRINGING IN FEAR--

-- OR, BY RAISING A HOARY HOST OF DEMONS TO BATTLE HIM?

NOTHING CAN COMFORT ME NOW--

NO! MEPHISTO HAS OTHER, FAR MORE POTENT WEAPONS! DECEIT! TREACHERY!

I SHALL STRIKE AT THE BEYONDER IN A WAY HE WOULD NEVER SUSPECT!

THOUGH THE THOUGHT OF IT REVOLTS ME, I SHALL HELP PRESERVE MY OWN INFERNAL DOMAIN BY SIDING WITH THE FORCES OF LIFE!

WAIT! I SUDDENLY SENSE A PRESENCE--!

MEPHISTO! I'VE COME FOR YOU AND YOUR ENTIRE REALM! I'M GOING TO ERASE THIS MESS-- AND, THEN, CONTINUE ONTO THE REST OF THE MULTI-VERSE!



DON'T BOTHER TRYING TO RESIST ME. IT WON'T DO YOU ANY GOOD!

I DON'T THINK MANY PEOPLE WILL BE SORRY TO SEE THIS PLACE GO! JUST LISTEN TO THAT RACKET!



I ALWAYS FOUND IT UPLIFTING!

I'LL BET!

OH, WELL, I SUPPOSE I SHOULD GET STARTED. I HAVE A LOT OF WORK AHEAD OF ME!

WAIT! AN IMMORTAL SUCH AS YOURSELF SHOULDN'T FEEL PRESSURED BY TIME!

THERE IS NO NEED FOR HASTE!

MY HUMBLE DOMAIN AND I MAY YET PROVIDE YOU WITH A SMALL AMUSEMENT, OR TWO.

I DOUBT IT! I'VE ALREADY SEEN EVERYTHING THIS MULTIVERSE HAS TO OFFER.



PERHAPS, THAT IS TRUE...

"... BUT, AS I UNDERSTAND IT, YOU ORIGINALLY BECAME AWARE OF THIS MULTIVERSE BECAUSE SOME COSMIC EVENT POKED A PINHOLE INTO YOUR UNIVERSE..."

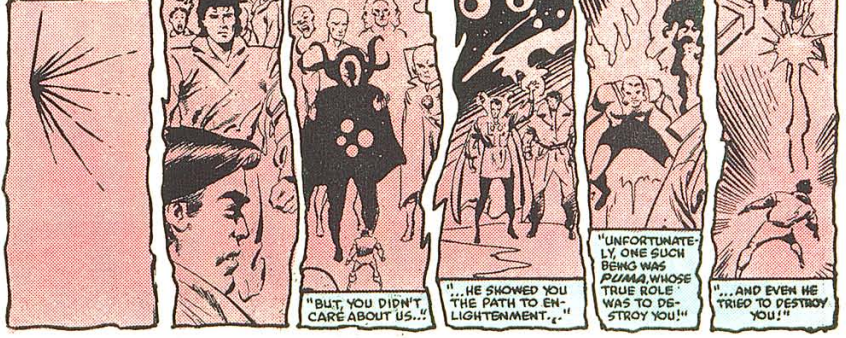
"FASCINATED, YOU TOOK HUMAN FORM AND CAME HERE TO WALK AMONG MEN, AND STUDY THE THING CALLED DESIRE!"

"OF COURSE, THE PRESENCE OF ONE AS POWERFUL AS YOURSELF DID NOT GO UNNOTICED BY THE GREAT BEINGS OF THIS UNIVERSE!"

"... YOU WERE ONLY INTERESTED IN CONTINUING YOUR STUDIES. EVENTUALLY, YOU MET A RATHER DISTASTEFUL INDIVIDUAL KNOWN AS DOCTOR STRANGE..."

"... AND, YOU SOON CONCLUDED THAT YOUR TRUE ROLE IN THIS UNIVERSE WAS TO SHOW ALL THE OTHER BEINGS WHAT THEIR TRUE ROLES WERE!"

"CONFUSED BY ALL THIS, YOU TURNED TO THE ONE BEING IN THIS UNIVERSE WHOM YOU PERCEIVED AS A FRIEND, OWEN REECE, THE MOLE, CULE MAN..."

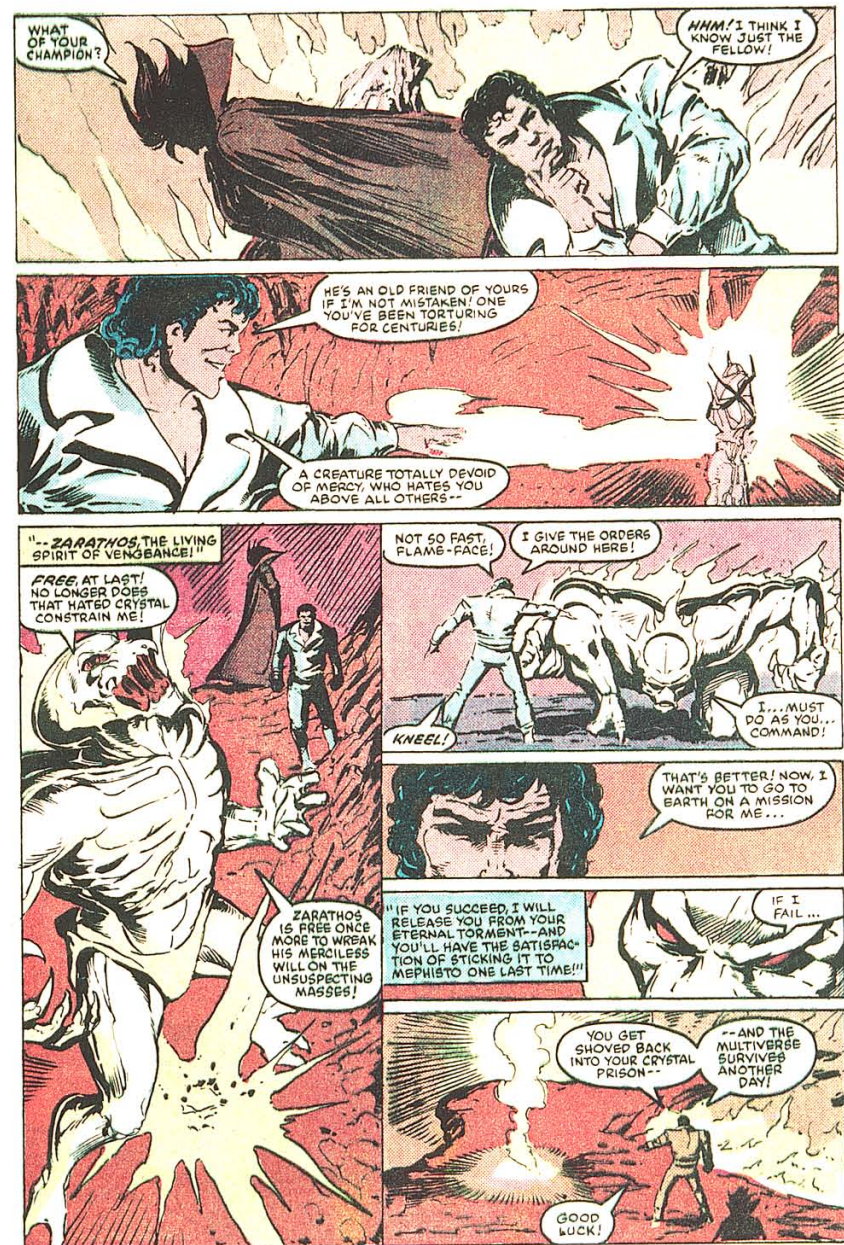


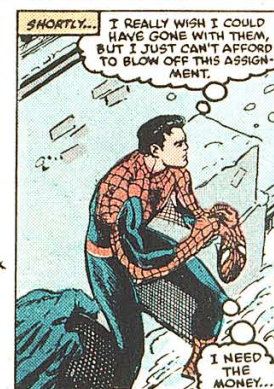
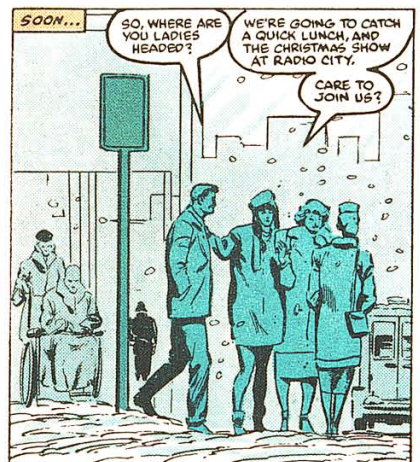
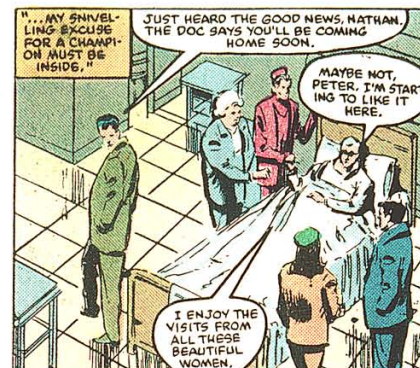
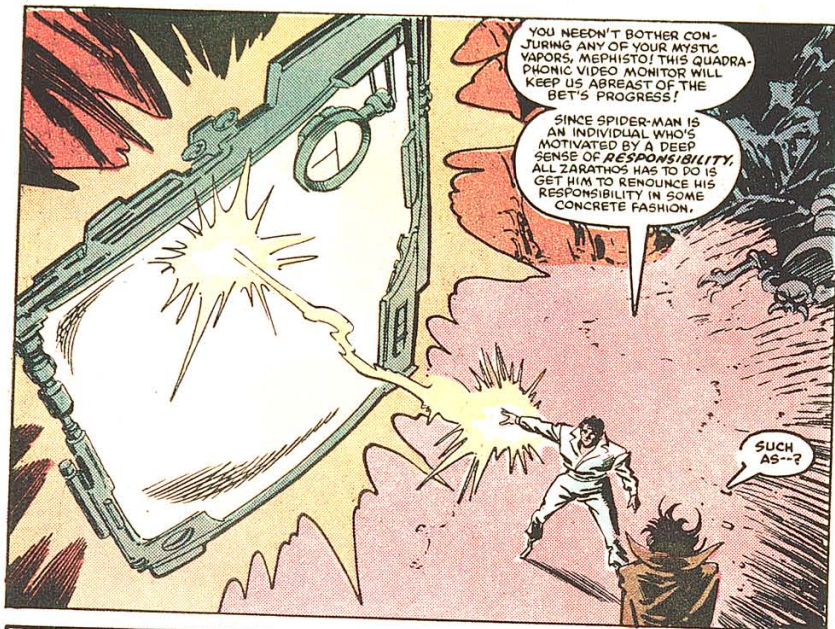
"BUT, YOU DIDN'T CARE ABOUT US..."

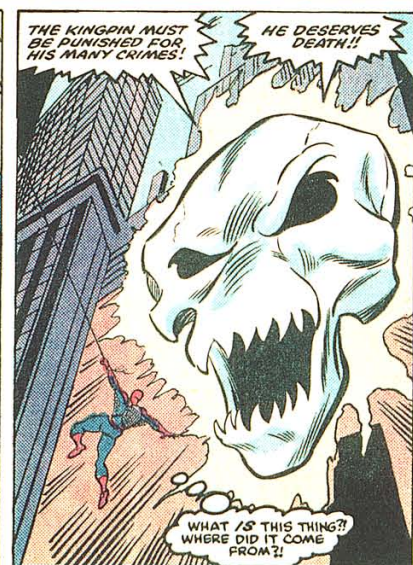
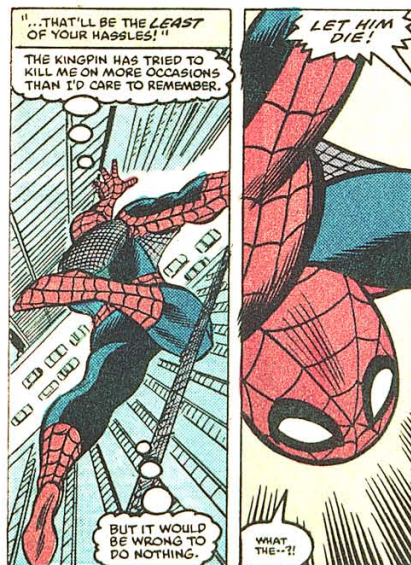
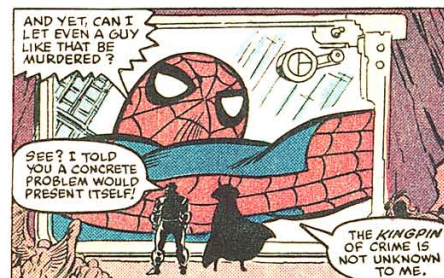
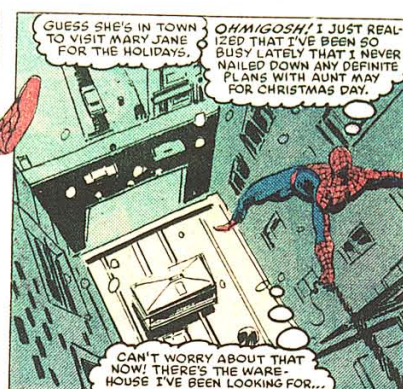
"HE SHOWED YOU THE PATH TO ENLIGHTENMENT..."

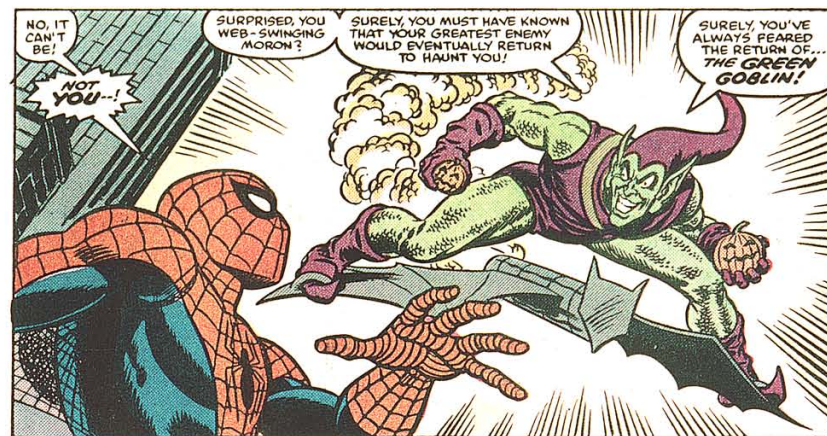
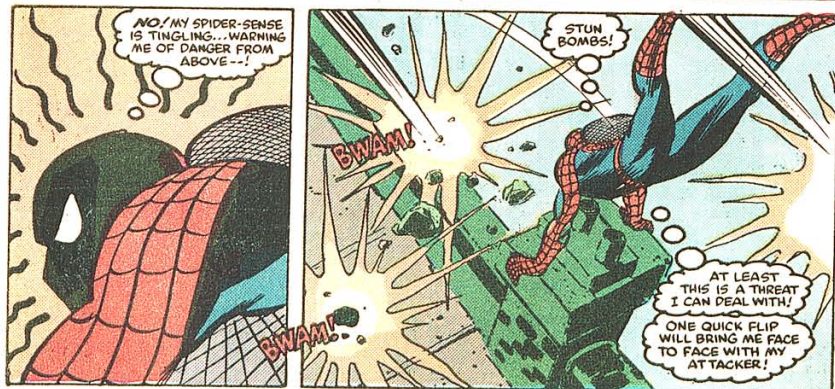
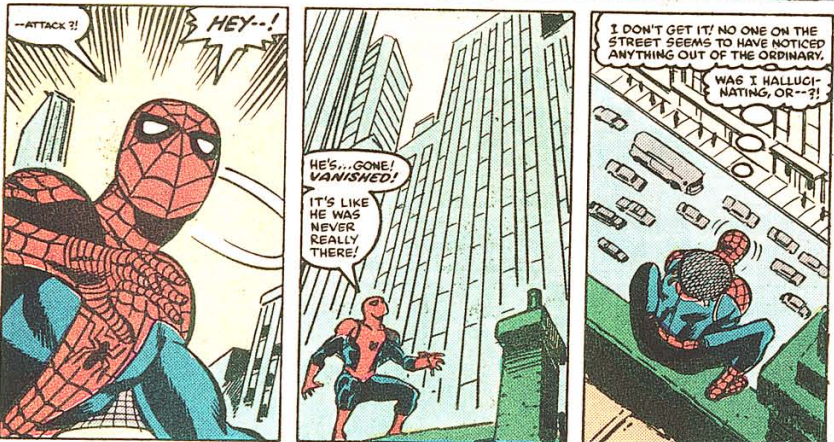
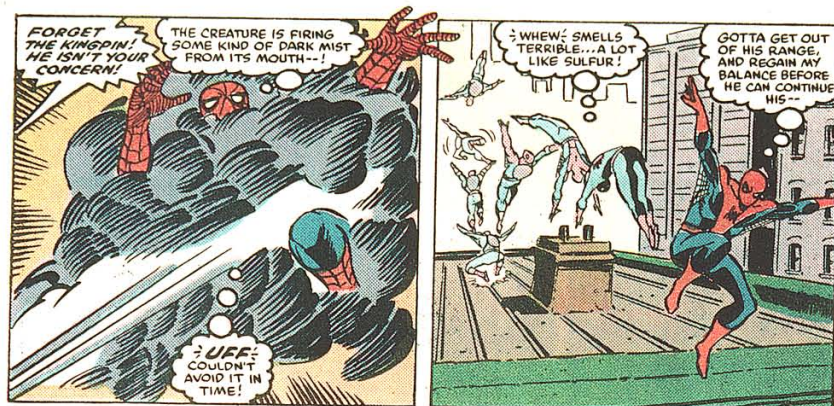
"UNFORTUNATELY, ONE SUCH BEING WAS PUMA, WHOSE TRUE ROLE WAS TO DESTROY YOU!"

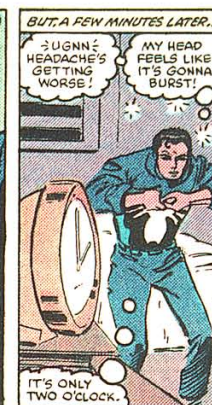
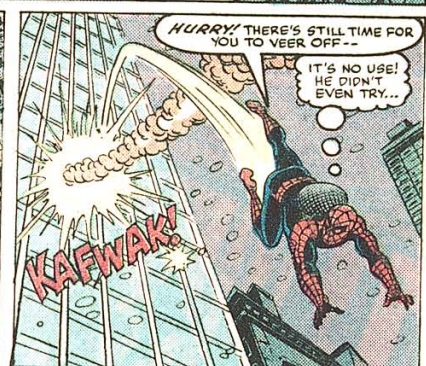
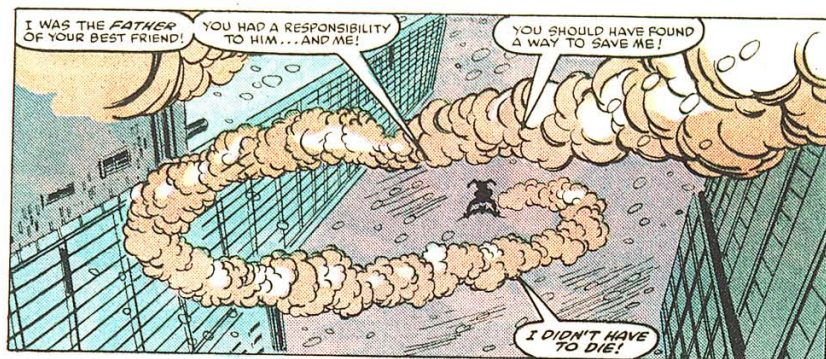
"... AND EVEN HE TRIED TO DESTROY YOU!"

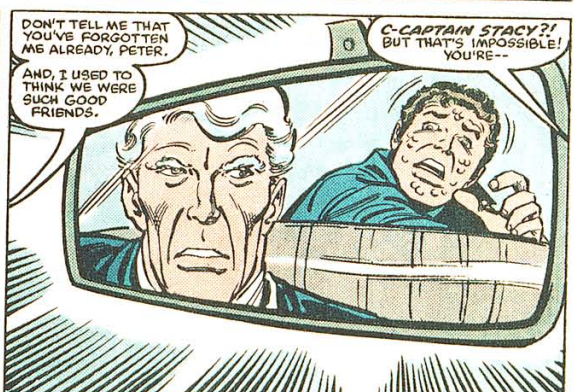
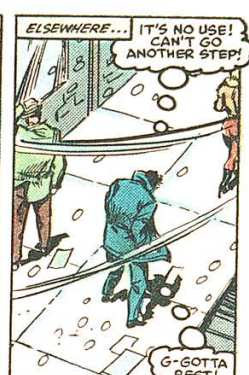
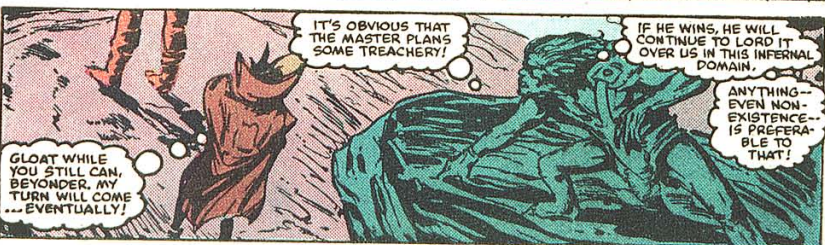
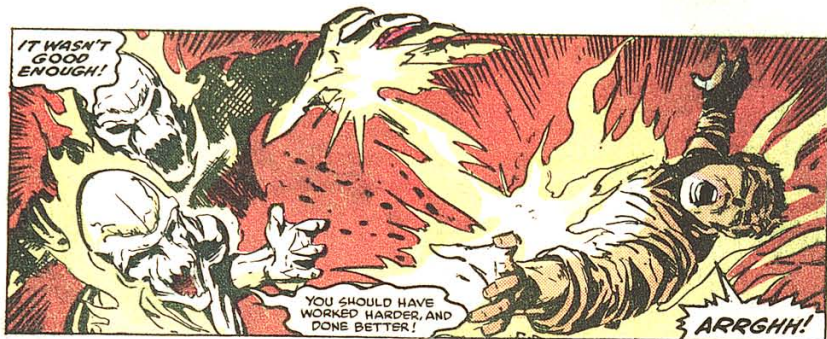


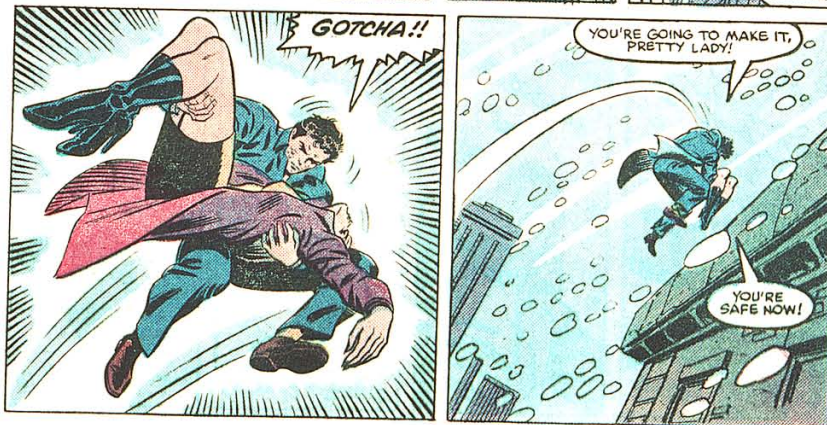
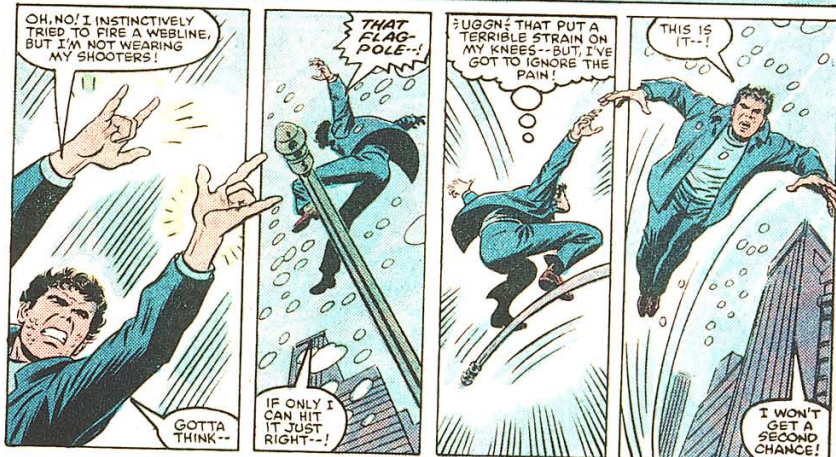
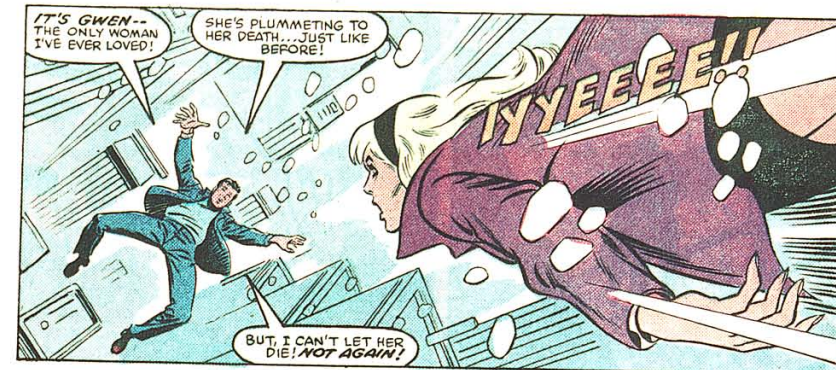
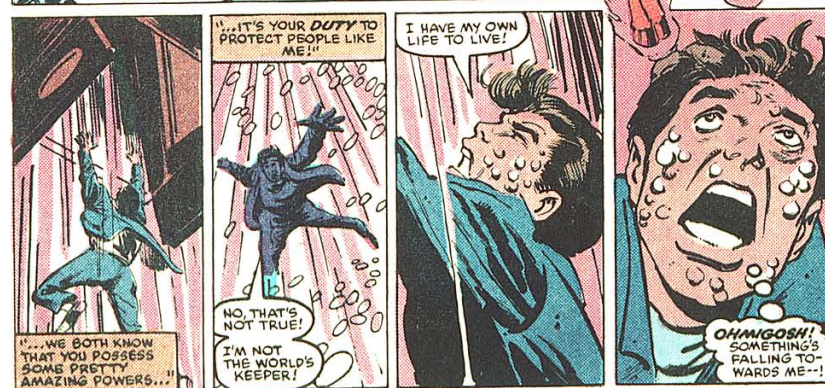
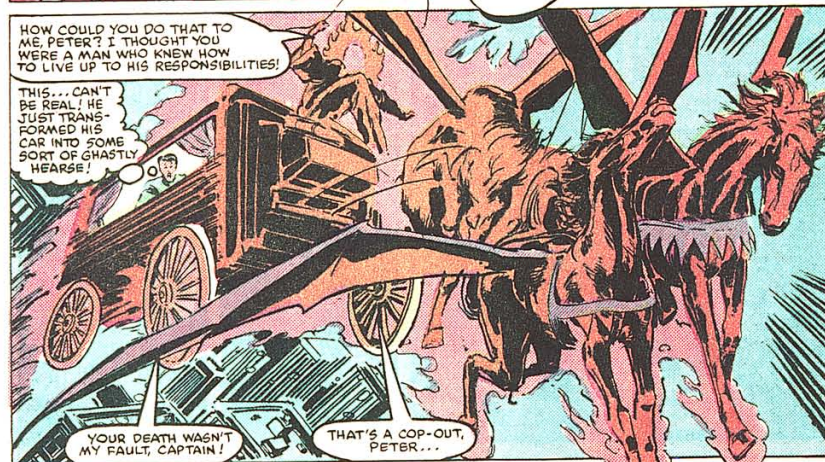


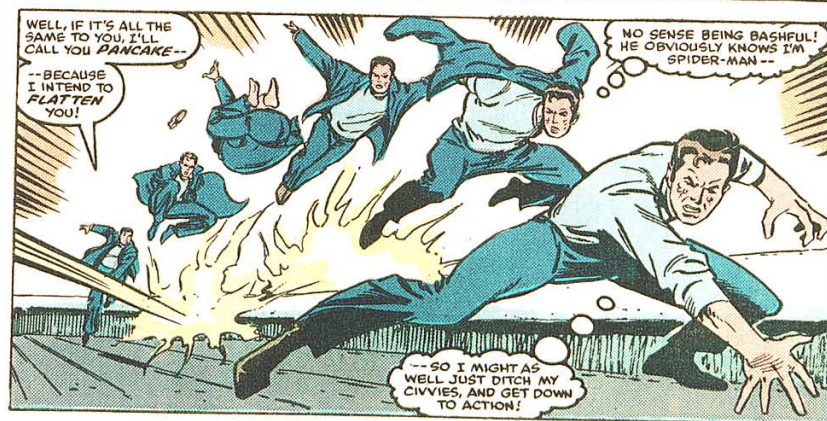
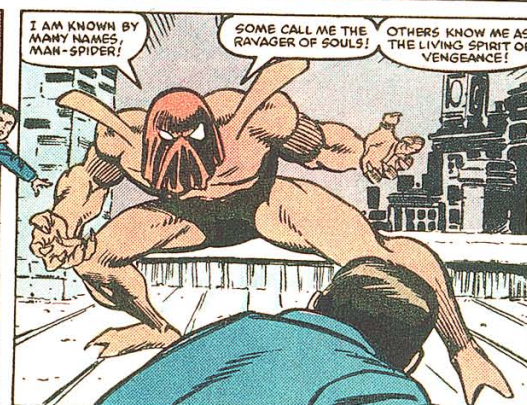
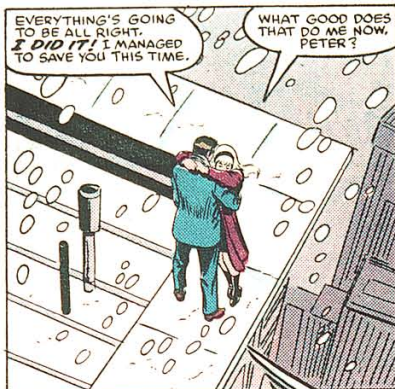














WHY DO YOU CONTINUE TO RISK YOUR LIFE FOR OTHERS?

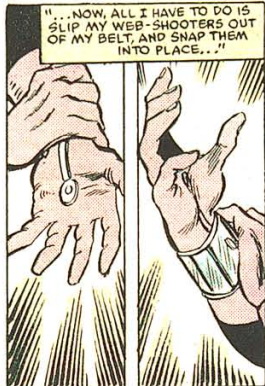
NO ONE APPRECIATES YOU!

NO ONE CARES!

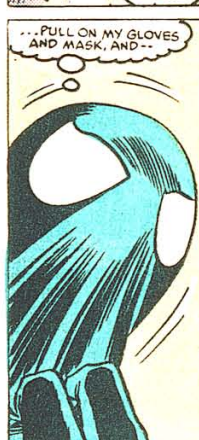


HE'S... RIGHT, BUT I CAN'T LET THAT STOP ME!

THERE! MANAGED TO LOSE MY PANTS...



"...NOW, ALL I HAVE TO DO IS SLIP MY WEB-SHOOTERS OUT OF MY BELT, AND SNAP THEM INTO PLACE..."



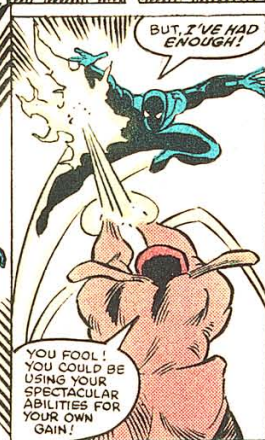
...PULL ON MY GLOVES AND MASK, AND--



--TA DA! WHO SAYS CLOTHES DON'T MAKE THE MAN?!

MISTER, I DON'T PRETEND TO KNOW WHAT'S BEEN GOING ON TODAY.

I'M NOT SURE THAT I EVEN WANT TO KNOW.



BUT, I'VE HAD ENOUGH!

YOU FOOL! YOU COULD BE USING YOUR SPECTACULAR ABILITIES FOR YOUR OWN GAIN!



MEANWHILE...



TICK!



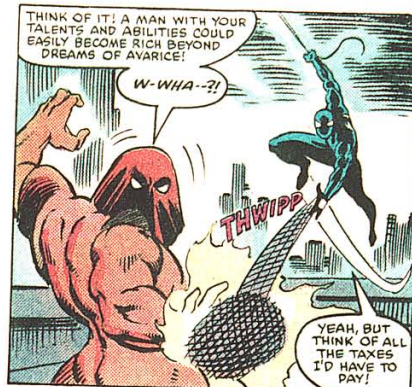
TICK!



TICK!



TICK!



THINK OF IT! A MAN WITH YOUR TALENTS AND ABILITIES COULD EASILY BECOME RICH BEYOND DREAMS OF AVARICE!

W-WHA--?!

THWIP!

YEAH, BUT THINK OF ALL THE TAXES I'D HAVE TO PAY!



THE GOOD OL' INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE WOULD BE ABOUT AS ANXIOUS TO HIT ME--AS I AM TO SLAM YOU!



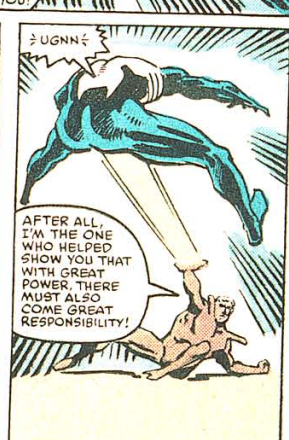
NO COMMENT, HUH?

THEN, I GUESS YOU WON'T MIND IF I SEE WHAT YOU LOOK LIKE BENEATH THIS RAG--!



O-UNCLE BEN--?!

OF COURSE, PETEY!



UGNN--?

AFTER ALL, I'M THE ONE WHO HELPED SHOW YOU THAT WITH GREAT POWER, THERE MUST ALSO COME GREAT RESPONSIBILITY!



FACE IT, PETEY... YOU'RE A SCREW-UP! YOU'VE NEVER ONCE BEEN ABLE TO LIVE UP TO ALL YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES!



WHAT ABOUT YOUR AUNT MAY? WHEN DID YOU LAST SPEND ANY QUALITY TIME WITH HER?

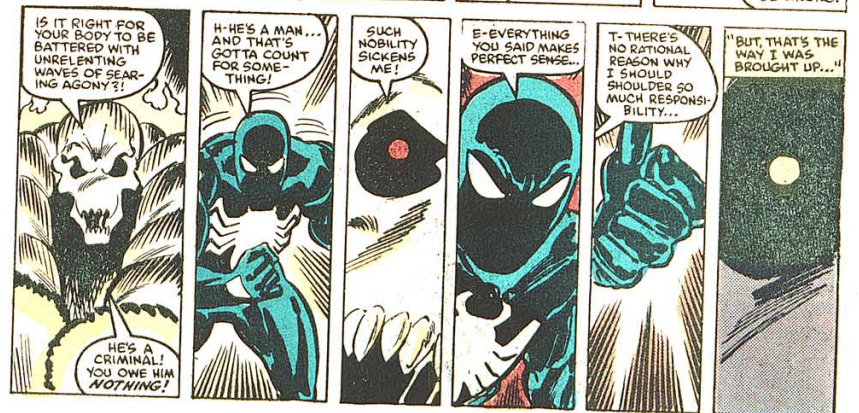
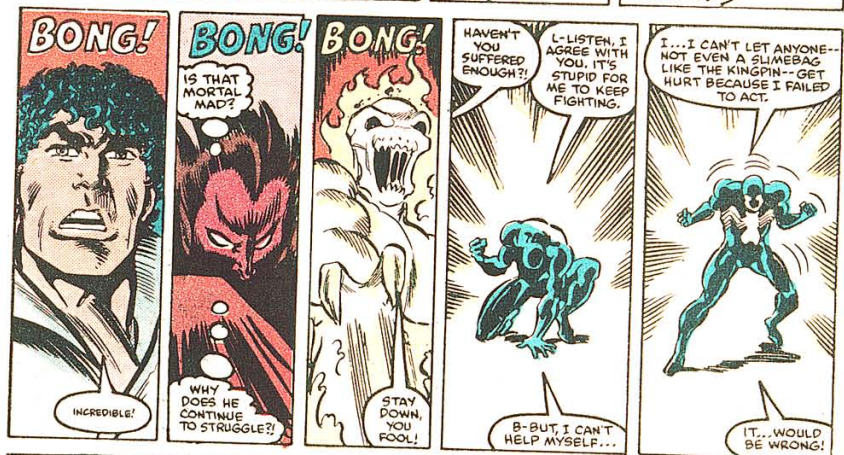
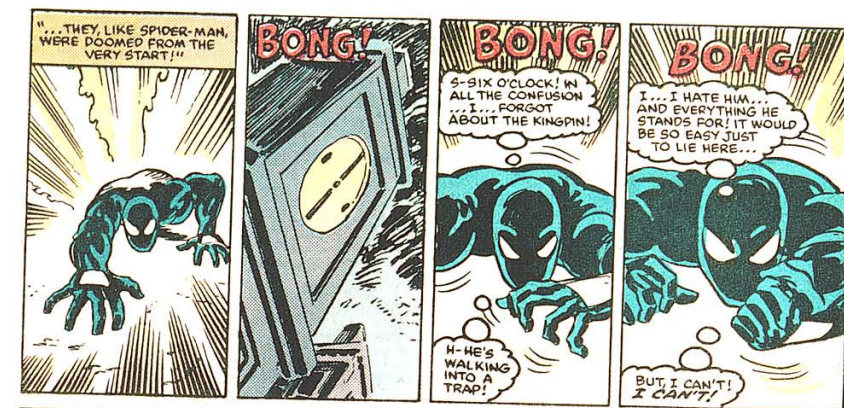
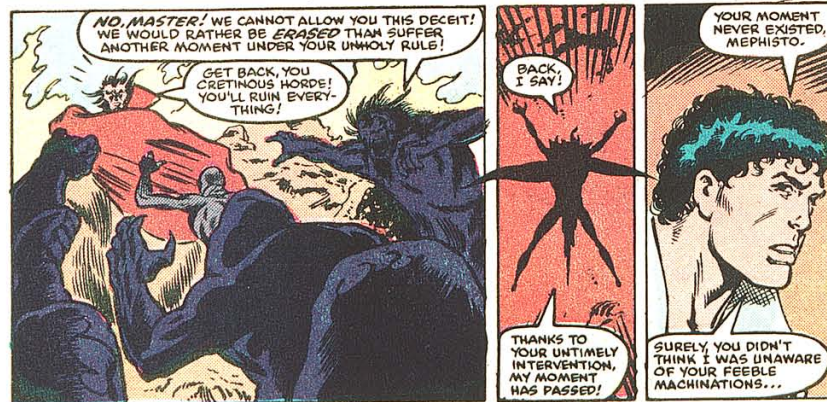
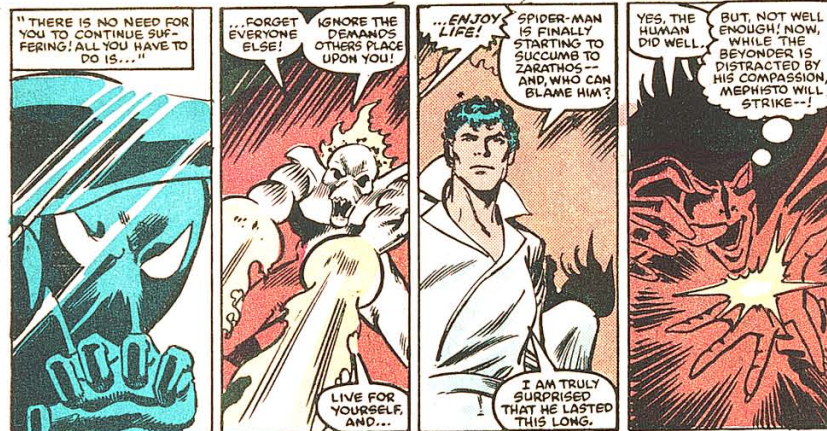
MY ILLUSIONS ARE FINALLY STARTING TO GET TO HIM!

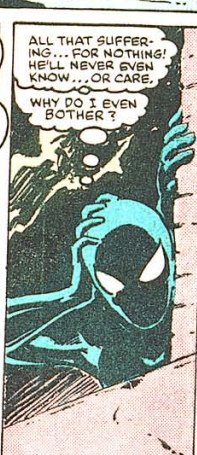
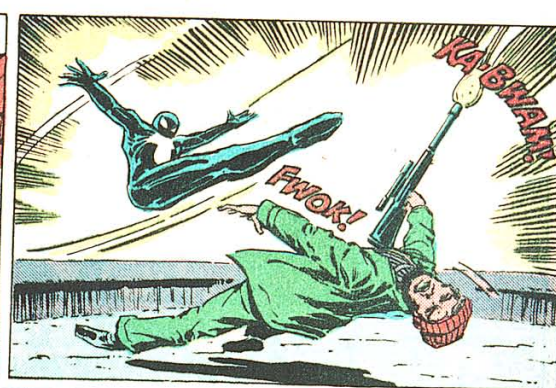
HIS AGONY MUST BE INCREDIBLE...

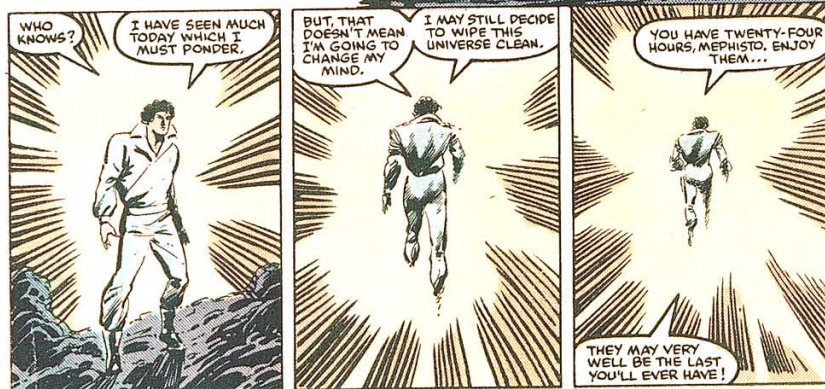
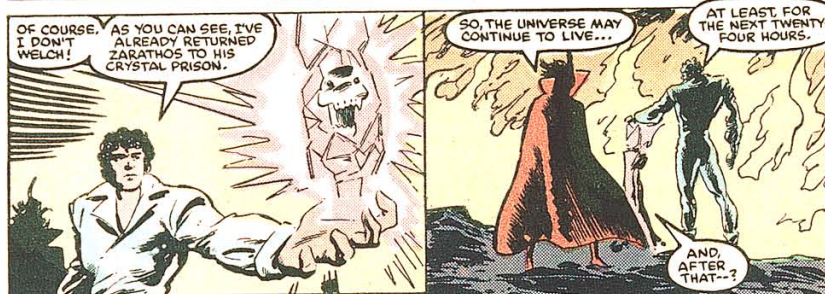


"...THE SOUL-NUMBING FURY OF MY HELLFIRE MUST BE RIPPING HIM APART!"

W-WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS TO ME?







THE BEGINNING OF THE END.
DON'T DARE MISS THE AWESOME CONCLUSION.
NO ONE ELSE WILL.

SECRET WARS II

NEXT ISSUE: A GIANT-SIZED EXTRAVAGANZA FEATURING THE LONG-DEMANDED...
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THE SPIDER'S WEB

JIM OWSLEY
EDITOR
ADAM BLAUSTEIN
ASSISTANT EDITOR

VIEW FROM THE TENTH FLOOR

Unless you're the kind of person who skips immediately to the letters pages of your favorite magazine, I'd say by this point you've now read one of the best Spider-Man yarns ever. Tom and Ron pulled out all the stops on this one, delivering all the action, all the drama, all the pizzazz any die-hard Marvelite could ask for. An instant classic, well worth the long hours Assistant Editor Adam Blaustein and I put into bringing it to you.

Be here next month, when we feature the special all-blank-ish, No cover, no art, no story. But, a breeze to put out...

Er...that is...I mean...
Be here in thirty days for the gala launching of Marvel's 25th Anniversary celebration, with a giant-sized special issue of AMAZING SPIDER-MAN! And, if that's not enough, the issue contains a bonus re-presentation of the original 11-page origin story from AMAZING FANTASY #151 And, if that's not enough, the issues' tale, "The Choice And The Challenge," features a major turning point in Spider-Man's life! And, if all that still isn't enough for you...

...next issue features the return of The Hobgoblin!
There you have it, people. A book so crammed with extras it's more than worth the extra schickies you have to form out for it. And it's also more than worth the wait. Tom DeFalco, Ron Frenz, Joe Rubinstein. In thirty days.

As for me, I can be reached at the Happy Trails Home For The Terminally Exhausted. Send cookies.

Jim Owsley

SEND ALL LETTERS TO:
Marvel Comics Group, 387 Park Avenue South,
New York, NY 10016. Please include your name and address. We will, however, withhold them upon request.

Dear Merry Marvel Man,
WHOOPIE! WOW! WHAT A GREAT ISSUE! Number 269 really hit the spot! After reading #268, I wondered, "Hm... what could that light in space be?" Now I know, and I can't wait to see "The Hero and the Holocaust"! I always wondered why Peter Parker never changed into his civvie if he was in tough shape. I guess I know now!
Keep up the great work!!!

Peter Kasperowicz
172 S. Main St.
Cohasset, MA 02025

Dear Spider-Man,
The last two issues (269 & 270) have been just fantastic. Tom, you've outdone yourself! I love the plotting of issue #269!!! Firelord mistaken for a mutant while eating pizzaz! Hah! By the way, I have a sneaky suspicion that the mysterious stranger is recognizing Nathan, instead of Pete. It's just a hunch. I love the shoe-falling-out-of-the-tree scene. Firelord's dialogue just makes you believe he's got an over-sized ego! Ron, I've always loved your style. Keep up the good work. I also thought the covers of both issues were superb. I haven't loved a two-issue epic this much since Spider-Man battled the Juggernaut!! Spidey keeps saying people are out of his "class" or "league" and "hitters." If you ask me, Spider-Man doesn't have a class. The only thing holding him back is his lack of confidence. I've never written a letter to you guys before, but this time I couldn't keep myself back. Every one of you deserves congratulations! You've upheld the tradition that makes Spider-Man the best hero of all! Till Hobgoblin trades his jet glider in for a Buck.

David Clarke
2513 Plaza St.
Arlington, TX 76010

Dear Gang,
I have just finished reading AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #269-270 and my opinions are as follows:

1) Firelord's appearance—Great! It's about time that you got a superpowered villain for Spidey to fight, instead of these "ordinary" crooks! Keep 'em coming!

2) Spidey's victory (in #270)—Excellent! For too long, Spidey has been thought of as a "wimp" when compared to the Hulk, Thor, etc., but by beating Firelord, Spider-Man has shown that he is a major power in the Marvel Universe (that is my estimation of the effect of the event).

3) Ron Frenz's artwork—It was great! It is also improving rapidly! Keep up the good work!

Overall, this was a great story, and I can't wait for the next issue! Keep up the good work!

David Duncan
34 Benedict Terrace
Longmeadow, MA 01106

Dear Wall Crawlers,
"Spider-Man—Stop! You can't beat Firelord!"... "Wanna Bet?"

Those words said it all. Issue #270 was fantastic. I loved seeing Spidey take on the Firelord. Surely, his victory over the former herald of the Big "G" must rank as one of Spider-Man's greatest ever. I really liked the tie-in with the Avengers, too. Especially Hercules' thoughts of the Web-head, as revealed in AVENGERS #258.

But I have a few questions about Spider-Man. First, is Captain America really that much bigger than Spider-Man? I know that the Web-Slinger is alot stronger and more agile than Cap, but I couldn't believe the size difference. And secondly, if Spider-Man can knock out a guy like Firelord, how can people like the Kingpin, Puma, and Hobgoblin give Spidey so much trouble?

By the way, where is old Hobby, anyway?

J.S.
Dunwoody, GA

Well, J.S., to find the answer to your question about Spidey versus Firelord, simply read the next letter! As for Hobgoblin, by now you know where he is...

Dear Marvel,
Spider-Man #270 was awesome! Great! The fight scenes were not only entertaining, but were logical and realistic. Spider-Man's struggle for survival, combined with the fact that despite his growing fears and fatigue, Spider-Man kept on coming. Not only did that take tremendous amounts of courage and will-power, it was extremely realistic. Furthermore, it was logical the way Spider-Man used his acrobatic "spider" agility and reflexes to confuse Firelord. In addition, I simply LOVED the way Spider-Man used his "danger" or "spider" sense to enable him to anticipate Firelord's every attack.

As in normal humans, Spider-Man's adrenal medulla probably secreted large amounts of epinephrine in stressful and fearful state at the time of the battle, which stimulated the heartbeat rate, raised blood levels, and inhibited sensations of fatigue (the "fight or flight" hormone) that heightened Spider-Man's physical abilities, thus giving him a great advantage over Firelord.

Furthermore on the subject, I think, in my opinion, that Spider-Man is obviously getting stronger and more powerful than ever before. I mean, in the early days, Spider-Man had only sufficient power to handle ordinary criminals with handguns, criminals with highly sophisticated weaponry, and only small time super-folk. Currently, Spider-Man has been able to beat heavyweights like... Spidey Demon, the Submariner (you know, the "fish-man" who defeated the Incredible Hulk years ago), Titania (who defeated the She-Hulk from the SECRET WARS), plus... he darned near defeated the Uncanny X-Men, and he would have, too, given enough time.

In addition, Spider-Man has been able to hold his own for a LONG period of time against other heavyweights such as: the Unstoppable Juggernaut, the Incredible Hulk, the Avengers, the Silver Surfer, and the fact that he NEARLY defeated the Fantastic Four. Will this seeming power increment ever be established in the current OFFICIAL HANDBOOK OF THE MARVEL UNIVERSE, DELUXE EDITION??? Who knows.

Of course, if Spider-Man is going up against the Fly, his reputation is practically blown. As far as I know, the Fly is the only guy who was strong and fast enough to cause Spider-Man grief, as shown wasday back in Spider-Man #192-193. I would like to see the Fly in the NEAR future, and make it good and snappy, okay?

Tom, Ron... never have I seen you two do so well in all the years I've been living. Thanks.

Peter Chisholm
6033 Catherine St.
Phila, PA 19143

Dear Makers of Marvel History,

Spider-Man #270 was... worth waiting, camped out by my local comic shop, for! The artwork was tremendous! That fighting sequence on page 21 was the best pencil/ink job of Spider in action since Ditko. I MEAN IT!

The story wasn't so bad either. Peter Parker is not on Kathryn Cushing's favorite photo list, eh? Well, I don't like her anyway. I'm all for women's rights, but I can't stand pushy women, and that she is. Get rid of her.

Jonah seems to be mellowing some, perhaps Mrs. Jameson has something to do with it. I'd like to see how JJ and Maria are at home sometime, just to give us an idea how she copes with him.

I'm glad Spidey realized someone could've been hurt by the subway stunt. I can't believe he would endanger lives that way. Perhaps he was scared? I would be.

There are some things I wonder about, though, and they are:

1. Why don't you guys decide on Spidey's costume? If you ask me, stick to the Original!
2. What happened to the Black Cat since she and Spidey broke up?
3. Is Peter ever going to tell Aunt May his secret and why he does what he must? And what about May and Nate tying the knot?

4. When are we going to see Hobgoblin and the Puma again? How about Sandman? He and Spidey could work together to help him make restitution for his past!

5. How about another appearance by Pete's beautiful neighbors? Maybe Mary Jane? (WOW! MJ!)

And (finally, you say),
6. What's he (Spider-Man) going to do with the gold notebook?

I suspect the man in the shadows in ish #269 was:

- A. the man who saw Peter's face at the airport and photographed him (ish #262)
- B. someone from Nathan Lubensky's past
- C. 1—an agent of the Black Cat
- 2—an agent of the Beyonder
- D. the Puma

I suppose the answers to all my questions will be answered one way or another. Keep up the good work, you're re-defining the words Marvel Comics.

Dennis Price
6143 SE Robinson Rd
Bellevue, FL 32620

Dear Marvel,

I have been waiting a long time to see an issue like SPIDER-MAN #270. You did in that issue what you had only hinted at in a few other stories. You showed us and Spider-Man himself, plus the Avengers, what Spider-Man is really capable of. In defeating Fierol, a herald of Galactus, a guy who has gone toe-to-toe with Hercules and Thor, Spidey proved that he is far more powerful than he has ever given himself credit for. Remember in the past he has practically defeated a possessed Fantastic Four; he has fought the Hulk to a standstill. This is far more than any other character at his supposed power level could accomplish, say Daredevil, Captain America, or the Black Panther.

I have always believed that given his speed, strength, agility, and especially his spider sense that warns him of any danger, Spider-Man is in a much higher power class than previously thought.

What I'm getting at is, now that you have shown Spider-Man's true potential, keep it up! Let him fight more powerful enemies. And one more thing, I'm tired of the other Marvel heroes treating him like a second-class hero; granted he brings some of it on himself with his attitude, but let's face it, he can wipe the floor with almost every Avenger that has ever been, except Thor. Plus he has been around longer than most of them as well.

His recent fiasco with the Wasp is a perfect example. I hated the way the Wasp treated Spider-Man, like some junior hero learning the ropes. Let's have some respect for Spider-Man from now on.

Keep up the good work. I buy almost every comic that you put out and I'm 24 years old. Make Mine Marvel.

Skip Watson
607 Jordan Ln
Huntsville, AL 35805

Dear Sirs,

It would be impossible for me to describe exactly how exuberantly good ASM #270 was. Superlatives become inadequate; so suffice it to say that it was the best issue that I've seen in five or so years. Possibly longer. The action was fast and furious, two ingredients that have been sadly lacking for quite a while. The characterization was concise and precise, with a very nice (and welcome) appearance by the original 'old goat,' J. Jonah Jameson, as well as a well-portrayed new city editor, whom I'm sure we'll be seeing a lot more of in the near future. The scene with her snapping J.J.'s immortal cigar in half is a classic. The story reads well, and the art, as usual, is terrific.

But the actual core of greatness in this issue lies with the wall-crawler himself. In top form, to be sure, and as indomitable as the Peter Parker of old. 'Never say never' seemed to be the theme of this issue, and it was abundantly depicted.

Spidey simply would not quit, nor be beaten, and with each reappearance of Fierol, Spidey simply screwed up his determination, clenched his fists once again and just hit him harder. In the end, it was not the superior power that won, but the one with the greater spirit. That's what Spider-Man started out as being about, and it's fantastic to see a return to those values.

Again, my hearty kudos to all for a job very well done. Please continue more stories in that vein—it's the stuff that classic comic mags are made of.

Gary Bond
PSC Box 4689
Eglin AFB, FL 32542

Dear Web-Spinners,

Just got finished reading AMS #271. The Crusher was great and Manslaughter was awesome. The last scene with Peter and Aunt May really touched my heart. My thanks to Jim, Jim, and the rest of the crew for a great comic. So until Electro loses his juice, Make Mine Marvel!!!

Edward Hughes
Gouldsboro, PA

Dear Spider-Team,

In reference to issue #271—it couldn't be any better for Crusher Hogan's return. I would've never guessed that you guys would resurrect him from Marvel Memories. Who's next, the Living Brain?

And about Manslaughter, he's something else that really can't be Spidey's real villain. See to it when you bring him back, give Crusher an appearance or two, ok?

In closing I just wanna tell you guys that Ron Frenz is the best artist ASM ever had—let's have him for keeps. Keep Marvel's middle name 'Awesome' like always!!

Thomas Frasciola
227 Grant Ave
Middlesex, NJ 08846

Dear Spider-People,

I just wanted to tell you I was really impressed by #271. It wasn't the villain. Manslaughter was alright, but he's not someone I'd be especially anxious to see again in a book. Likewise, Madame Fang wasn't anything special. No, the thing that impressed me was the way you used Hogan.

When I first heard you were going to bring back Crusher Hogan, I thought, "Oh, no, another character from Spidey's past somehow gets superpowers and comes to get revenge story." When I saw the cover, I really became worried: Manslaughter—it even sounds like a wrestler.

Then I read the book. Then I read it again. You avoided that clichéd plotline, and instead you gave us a truly classic comic book. Page 21, panel 5 was really touching. And the last page for a few brief seconds, I actually forgot this was a comic book. I was really worried for Peter and Nathan for a moment. Whew! That's a sign of a good piece of literature. Bravo!

While I'm writing, I may as well give you my theory on the ever-elusive identity of the Hobgoblin. It's terribly obvious; I'm surprised no one's figured it out. Those who accused various members of the bullpen were close; they merely accused the wrong ones. The Hobgoblin is ... (insert drum roll) Howard Mackie. Don't laugh. Think about it. Marvel's most mysterious villain is really Marvel's most mysterious assistant editor. After all, what do we, you, or anybody for that matter, know about him? Very little indeed. No one is even sure what he looks like (except maybe his mother and even that's doubtful). He has never really revealed anything about himself to Marveldom assembled. Obviously he has something to hide, and this is it. He did pop up in the bullpen shortly after the Hobgoblin appeared.

Think about it. Howard the Duck in '88.

Anthony Kowalewski
229 Everett St.
Southbridge, MA 01550

Say, what does Howard look like, anyway?!

Dear Jim,

It was fitting that AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #271 was a nostalgic look back at Crusher Hogan, because the art team of Frenz and Rubenstein evokes a feeling of the "good of days" in Spider-Man's life when things were simpler, even though they really have not been as bad as Peter seems to think they have, until recently.

Before the last year or so, the tales in the assorted Spider-Books have kept the life of the hero at a status quo. Lately, though, with the addition of an editor who does not like Peter's photographs with women who never took much formal training in photography, the death of Jean DeWolff, Mary Jane's discovery of his identity and even the sun-bathers on his roof, Peter Parker has often had good reason to consider the spider's bite as a curse instead of a blessing.

Issue #271 is a good example of this new trend, as again he finds that superheros can't him away from keeping his promises to Aunt May. While Manslaughter certainly was not a great threat to Spider-Man, the complete futility of his situation: rescuing Hogan and the fighter while Nathan was being attacked by John sharks, was expressed well. The closing scene with Aunt May ended as many have in the past, but I have one complaint: Peter needs to stop letting Aunt May dictate their relationship. Whenever he feels that he has let her down, he listens to her complaints and then backs away. For once, I would like to see him stop her from closing the door on his face (and their relationship) and go inside and talk with her.

Finally, there is one more point that I would like to make. In the Marvel Universe most of the biggest solitary heroes are single. Spider-Man, Daredevil, Thor, and Cap all have had relationships that could have but for various reasons (death, the danger of being linked to a superhero, etc.) have not led to the altar. Now that Mary Jane knows that Pete is Spider-Man, there is no reason why they couldn't marry if their relationship called for it. While this certainly would be a major change in the life of Marvel's "star attraction," it would be a very welcome one.

Thanks for a very good comic, another of those trends you seem to be starting behind the scenes of Marvel's Spider-Books!

Roger Z. Cadenhead
Garland, TX

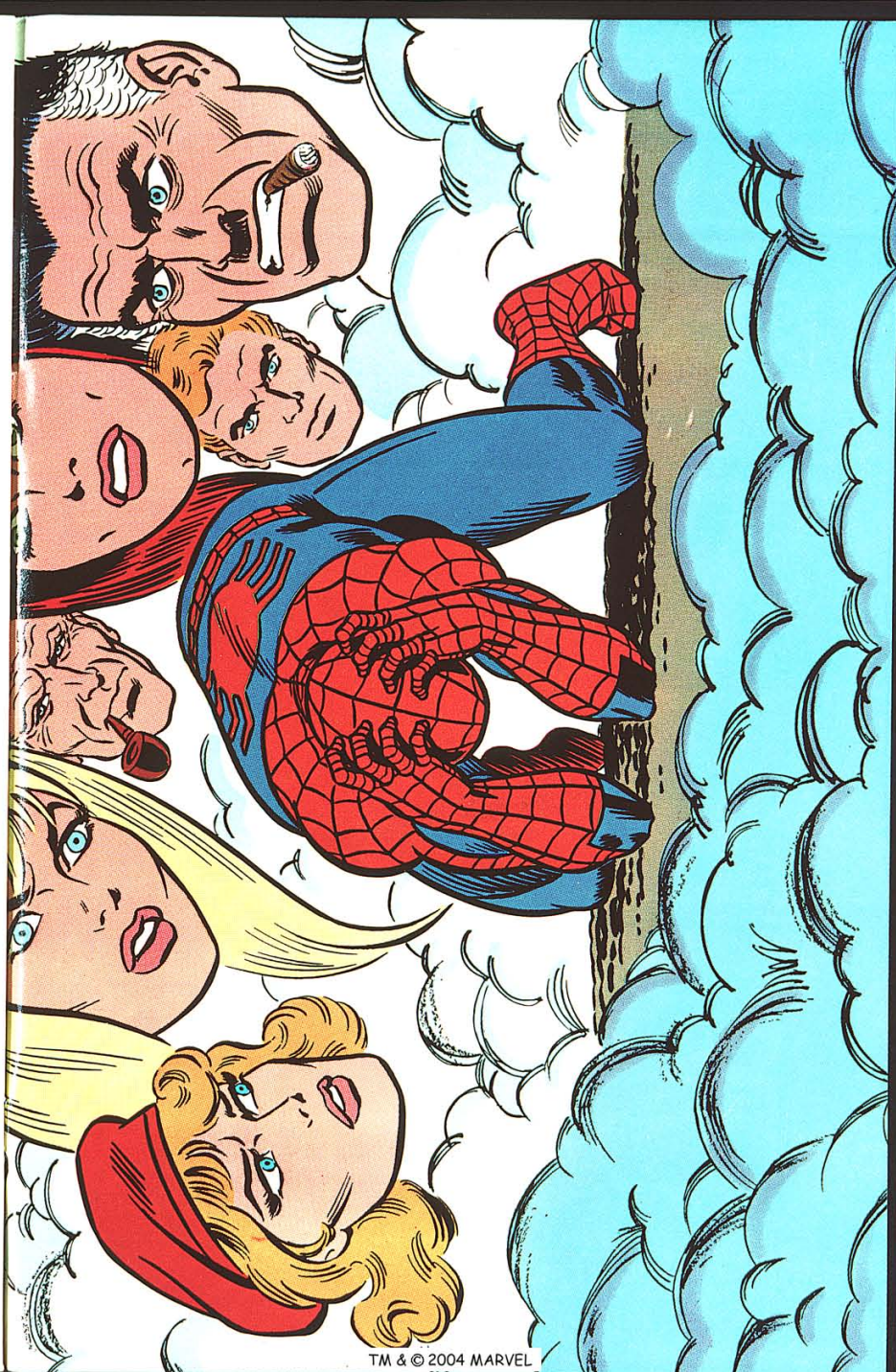
Friends,

As I approach my 20th year of being an ardent fan of SPIDER-MAN, I would like to express to everyone involved in the magazine over the last two decades, my appreciation and admiration of the title's continuing high quality. After all these years, I consider Pete, Flash, Harry, Mary Jane, Robbie, Betty, and JJJ to be very special friends, not just delightful creations of someone's imagination.

The magazine has never lost its appeal to me—as a youngster, I eagerly awaited each new villain and his/her battle with Spidey. Now, I concentrate more on the personal relationships between Pete and his friends. I hope that you'll continue to supply me with another 20 years of fun memories. Thanks a lot guys, it's been a blast!

Greg Lowen
1608 Brockton St. #2
Los Angeles, CA 90025

As Marvel moves into its 25th year of bringing you the very best in comics entertainment, we'd just like to thank you, Greg, for being aboard for so much of the way.



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